The Ponderosa

The Pine Ridge Association Newsletter
Henry W. Coe State Park

Fall 2007

Never Get Lost Again in Henry Coe

by Dinesh Desai

Have you ever used Henry Coe's 2002 or 2006 Trail & Camping map? If so, maybe you have wondered about the sienna-colored horizontal and vertical lines with numbers such as 4116000 or 636000 at each end. Well, wonder no more. They represent the coordinates in the UTM (Universal Transverse Mercator) system. And, below is a short primer on the UTM coordinate system. Once you understand what the lines represent and how to use that information, you will be more confident exploring the farther reaches of the park. You will be able to find obscure trail junctions as well as trail continuations, and you will be less afraid of getting lost. Alas, there is a catch. Understanding what the lines represent, in itself, won't help you much. You will need to use the information in conjunction with a hand-held GPS unit.

GPS, or Global Positioning System, is comprised of a number of satellites encircling the earth and a receiving unit that gets a signal from the satellites. An entry-level unit, called a GPS receiver by the nerds, but just a GPS by the common folks, costs around $100 and is quite adequate for most people. When a GPS receives a signal from the satellites, it is able to display its position. The position is expressed in terms of a coordinate system, which might be either latitude and longitude in degrees or UTM in meters.

Many of you are familiar with the coordinate system that employs latitudes and longitudes. Latitudes run parallel to the equator and the longitudes extend from pole to pole. Since the longitudes are not parallel to each other, the distances between any two longitudes are different at different latitudes. This fact makes the system difficult to use in the field. Another coordinate system, called UTM was developed to address this problem. I will not try to explain the inner workings of the UTM system lest you stop reading and start dozing. Here is all you need to know.

1. The entire Henry Coe State Park is in the UTM zone 10S and, of course, is in the Northern Hemisphere. The letter S in 10S does not stand for south; it is just a zone letter.

2. The vertical lines are called eastings. In the park map, they increase as you go east, from 626,000 to 650,000.

3. The horizontal lines are called northings. In the park map, they increase as you move north, from 4100,000 to 4130,000.

4. The easting of a point between two adjacent easting lines such as 626,000 and 627,000 will vary from 626,001 to 626,999. The same is true for the northing of a point.

5. For all practical purposes, and this is the beauty of the system, the distance between any two adjacent easting or northing lines is always the same. It is one kilometer or 1,000 meters. That translates to 0.62 miles. The grid formed by the easting and the northing lines consists of

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Would you like to be on the PRA board of directors?

. . . and more!

equal squares. On the park map, if you take a ruler and measure the distance between any two adjacent easting lines, say 626,000 and 627,000, you will find that it is 1 and 10/16" or 26 of the 1/16" ruler marks. Since the easting increases by 1,000 meters from 626,000 to 627,000, each 1/16" mark equals 1,000 / 26 = 38.46 meters. Thus, a point four marks from 626,000 towards 627,000 has an easting of 626,000 + (4 x 38.46) = 626,154. Too complicated? Not really. Just use the table below and you won't have to do any such math.

Number of 1/16" marks	Distance (Meters)	Number of 1/16" marks	Distance (Meters)
1	038	14	538
2	077	15	577
3	115	16	615
4	154	17	654
5	192	18	692
6	231	19	731
7	269	20	769
8	308	21	808
9	346	22	846
10	385	23	885
11	423	24	923
12	462	25	962
13	500		

That's all you need to know about the UTM grid. Let's get a couple of things clarified about your GPS, and you are ready to use your new knowledge to explore the park.

Most GPSs are factory set to the latitude/longitude coordinate system. Go to the menu in your GPS and change the primary coordinate system to UTM. The GPS will then display your position in the UTM coordinate system. Most maps indicate the datum used in constructing the map. Essentially, a datum indicates a set of reference points from which all measurements are taken. It is absolutely essential that your GPS be set to the same datum as the one indicated on the map you are using. The park map identifies the datum as NAD 83. Most GPSs are factory set to WGS 84 datum, which is the same as NAD 83. Many topographic maps, however, use the NAD 27 datum. If you borrow a GPS previously used by someone who had the datum set at NAD 27 and you do not change the datum, you could easily experience an error of several hundred feet.

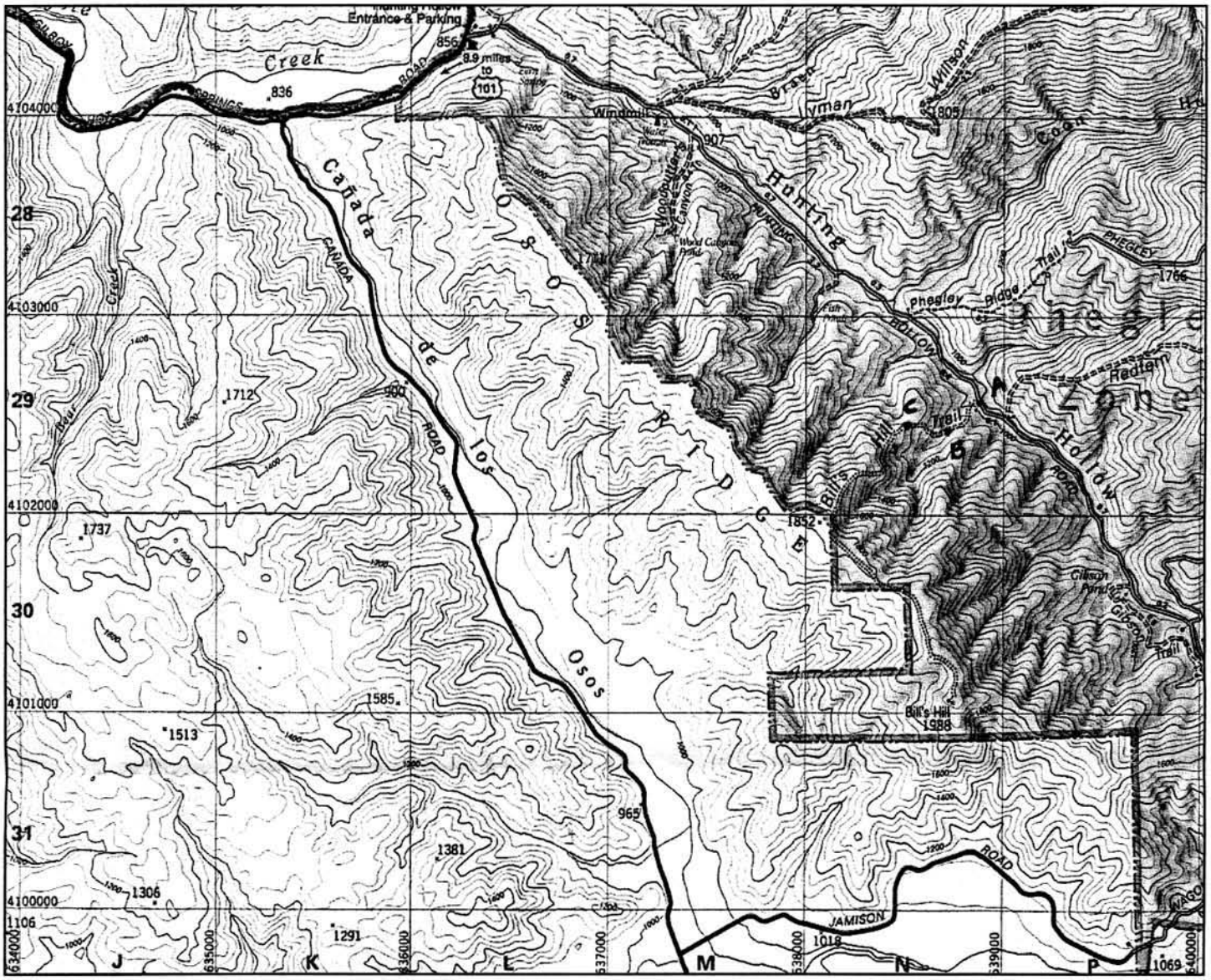
The Southern Section of the park map shows an obscure trail/road called Bill's Hill Trail. Its junction with Hunting Hollow Road is about two miles from the parking area. The junction isn't signed, but here is how to go about finding it using your GPS and the UTM grid of the park map. The junction, point A on the map on the next page, is east of 638,000. The map printed here is reduced in scale, and therefore you must use the actual park map to measure distances. On the park map, it is 1 and 7/16" or 23 of the 1/16" marks away. Thus, its easting is 638,000 + 885, or 638,885. (See table above.) Similarly, it is 15 marks north of 4102,000 and its northing is 4102,577.

Now that you have the easting and the northing of point A, you can enter the information on your GPS as, say, waypoint A. You can do this before you even leave your home. Once in the park, you can turn on your GPS and use its "go to" function and set it to go to waypoint A. You then follow your GPS, and it will take you to within a few feet of the waypoint A. Once there, you may find a stake, a ribbon, or maybe a cairn confirming that you have found the beginning of the trail. Even if the junction isn't flagged, a careful look in the general vicinity will help you find that obscure road/trail.

However, just because you found the beginning of the trail doesn't mean you are home free. Sometimes, trails are obscured by fallen trees or overgrown shrubs. Or, you might come to a point where the continuation of the trail isn't readily apparent. In the latter case, turn on your GPS, and find your current position. As an example, let us assume that your GPS indicates your position as E 638,650 and N 4102,418. Using the last three digits and working backwards in the table, you find that, approximately, 650 corresponds to 17 marks and 418 to 11 marks. Thus, you are 17 marks east of the 638,000 line and 11 marks north of the 4102,000 line. Using a ruler, you can plot your position on the map. That point is marked as "B" on the map. Of course, before you can do that in the field, you will need a ruler and the table. I have found that the back side of a business card works well to create a makeshift ruler and include the table. On the short side (usually two inches long) of the card, mark the ruler divisions and underneath write the numbers from the table. If you find yourself without a ruler or the table, you can always guesstimate and locate your position on the map; 650 is a little more than halfway from 638,000 to 639,000 and 418 is a little short of halfway from 4102,000. Now you know that you are at point B on the trail and that you are unable to find the continuation of the trail. You just pick a point further on the trail and compute its coordinates in the same manner as you did for point A. Again, using your GPS, you will then be able to reach that further point (point C on the map) and once again, be back on the trail.

I strongly advise you to carry a makeshift ruler and the table along with the map and your GPS. You can cut out the card on page 5 and glue it to a business card. If you were to be blindfolded and dropped off somewhere in the park, by using the above method, you will be able to determine exactly where you are. Even if you were not on a trail, using the above technique, you will be able to reach the nearest trail.

It is a lot easier to do any computations at home rather than in the field. If you are planning to explore only one obscure trail, you might want to compute the coordinates of several



points along the trail and enter them into your GPS, all in the comfort of your home. Once you are in the park, you can set your GPS to go to point A. Once you reach point A, you set it to go to B, etc.

To the best of my knowledge, no other local park has such a detailed map with the UTM grid as has Henry Coe. The credit for this amazing map goes to the hard work of Bob Patrie and Bill Levey. They walked all the trails of the park with their GPSs and carefully incorporated the data into the park map. The alignment of the trails on the park map is quite accurate and, following the bends shown, should give one a clue whether to proceed straight, to the right, or to the left.

Finally, in spite of the title of this article, it is possible to get lost in the park. Here are just a few reasons:

1. The little green men from Mars may someday make the GPS satellites inoperable. More likely, it could be due to an act of terrorism or technical problems.

2. Your GPS batteries run out of juice. Be sure to pack extra ones.

3. You fall and damage your GPS, rendering it useless.

4. Heavy tree cover may prevent the GPS from getting a proper satellite signal.

5. You wrongly calculate the coordinates, or you enter them wrong in your GPS.

6. You use the latitude or longitude lines shown on the map instead of the UTM lines. Look for the north-south longitudes 121° 30' 00" near UTM E 633,000 and 121° 22' 30"

near E 644,000. Look for the latitude 37° 07' 30" near UTM N 4110,000 and 37° 15' 00" near N 4124,000. To avoid confusion, I use a pen to put dash marks on the latitude and longitude lines.

7. And, the most important one—you leave your thinking cap at home!

The Dead Bug March

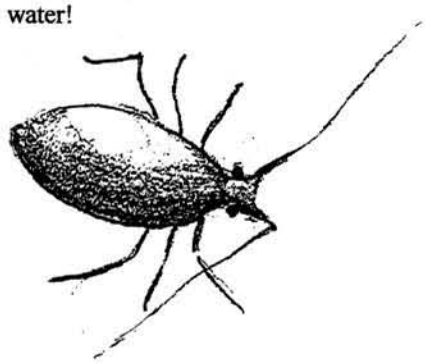
by Stuart Nuttall

At the time of this correspondence, Henry Coe State Park is in a spectacular spring bloom. Funny what happens when you are riding alone—as I looked upon a green carpet of miner's lettuce punctuated by the electric purple of shooting stars, my mind drifted back to this same spot last August.

I was somewhere between a heat stroke and a coma. August in Coe is hot, so brutal to anyone stupid enough to be there mid-day. So there I was, mid-day in Henry Coe. As I suffered on one of Coe's relentless, south-facing climbs, I wondered what was ascending faster—me or the temperature. Coe takes no prisoners—there are plenty of scavengers to "mop up" after you go down. This story is about that.

After a morning of petty procrastination, I finally told myself, "Work starts tomorrow, get that ride in, fool!" As I rolled past the porch, I glanced at our thermometer—95° in the shade—I'm gonna cook! Bring lots of water—I took three bottles—the first one was dusted before I got out of the car. The parking lot at Hunting Hollow was empty. In denial that it was that hot, I mounted and rode off—across a dry creek bed (clue #2). As you know, the trail leaving Hunting Hollow crosses the creek over 20 times as it meanders up to Steer Ridge Road—they were all dry! The second water bottle vanished even before I got to the end of Hunting Hollow. A half mile above Hunting Hollow, I realized that I was already cooking, the still air gave no relief—the ground temp rose above 120°. Holy cow—I was in a world of hurt. I thought maybe I should turn around and just go back down. "No!" a phantom ranch hand had appeared and shouted, "Cowboy up, city boy! You are not turning round." I said to myself, Whoa, was that me or a hallucination? Water will solve this—drink more water! At the turn off to Willson Camp, I took stock of my precious fluid—half of my last water bottle is gone—just vanished—time to cut and run. I turned towards Red Fern Pond, bagging the thought of making to Willson Camp. I can be back to Hunting Hollow in 20 minutes. A killer descent—great reason to bag this thankless ride! A turkey vulture circled above.

There's still more climbing—need more water. Shoot, where did it all go? Suddenly I got a chill—man, I'm on the verge of a heat stroke—or maybe I'm overreacting . . . or maybe I **am** hallucinating. I think I see a black beetle marching across the trail, but I swear its legs aren't moving. Advanced dehydration? More water!



The shiny black fuselage seemed to mock the heat. The little bugger must be boiling inside. I need my glasses—they're down at the car, argh! I quit peddling—this would be a great place to die—Hades couldn't be that far away from here. I grabbed my water and bent down to see how this thing was marching through the valley of death in such a cavalier way. Oh, wait, it **is** dead. The stupid thing was on a train of ants. I laughed out loud—mainly in relief that I wasn't at that state yet.

I took one last swallow and dumped the rest into my helmet vents in one contemptuous move against water conservation. Bad move—my eyes got hit with a concentrated flow of salt built up from the last month of riding. The phantom rider was kicking dirt in my eyes, "Common city boy!" I grimaced and got back on my "steed" and started to push and growl through the heat and pain over the top to Red Fern Pond. The phantom Coe rider will not win this match!

The pond looked more like a tar pit than an oasis. It had shrunk to the size of a large wild pig wallow. That's when I saw it—a tarantula—mid-day in August. Shaking my head, I stopped and got down to bug level. Another dead bug! It, too, was on a conveyer belt toward an ant nest. It must have been torn from its hole from the recent trail grading, or it could have been plucked out by a bird. Whatever the answer, I thought, "Get outta here—can't you see the pattern?" What the . . . some life—a turtle! It floated there in the shadow, then swam off as its threat approached.

I was encouraged to ride on. I got to the continental divide and stopped to see this hard-earned view. Monterey was under a blanket of fog. There must be 60° difference between here and there. I longed to be there.

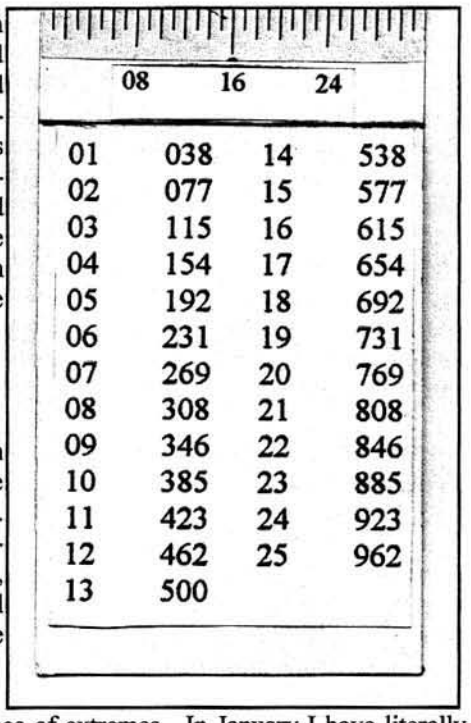
I turned my attention to the spoils of this ride—the downhill—a ribbon of single track that follows the spine of several foothills to the bottom.

But wait! What is moving around on the ground over there? Another dead bug? No, a dead toad! Being torn limb from limb by yellow jackets—it looked like they were playing tug-o-war with it.

Wow, time to high tail it. I aimed downward and fired. Since descending always commands the utmost respect and attention, the scenes of death were pushed aside for future recall.

Splash!

The cold water in the creek drew me back to spring. Wild flowers everywhere, wet feet, water bottle still full, what a ride that was!



Henry Coe is a place of extremes. In January I have literally ridden over creeks on a top sheet of ice, and six months later, I have fried in the heat. It is a place that requires respect and wisdom—one of which I did not use and luckily paid a small consequence. I'm happy I wasn't one of the parts departments I saw earlier.

As for that phantom rider—a ghost from our ranching past? Strangely I think I've seen him before, at the Line shack in Grant's Ranch. Did he know both Joseph and Henry? Or maybe it's that outlaw Joaquin Murieta . . . .

Reflections on Barry's Retirement

by John Mott
Cooperating Associations Program Manager

To Henry Coe State Park volunteers, staff, and Pine Ridge Association members:

I had the honor and privilege of being part of Barry Breckling's retirement party on June 9 with so many of you. The party was a moving and fitting tribute, and I fondly remember the fellowship and good times we all had.

It has been said that "A park without friends cannot survive; it has no soul, no first line of defense." To me, the group of people gathered at Barry's retirement was the embodiment of the "soul" of Henry W. Coe State Park. This soul has a physical form, but more importantly it has a passionate, spiritual element that transcends objective analysis.

Barry's retirement is a milestone in Coe Park history. His legacy and influence on the park will be long remembered. Barry's retirement leaves us feeling a sense of loss and even pain. These feelings will linger for months and even years. The transition to normality will take a while. We will not be able to replace Barry, but we will be able to honor and remember him. I think we can best do this by continuing what he has set in motion. It will not be easy, it will not be the same, and there will be changes. We will need time to adjust and learn a new dance. I encourage you during this transition to treat each other gently and realize that your soul mates are hurting, even if they do not show it. Strive to forgive transgressions and practice compassion. This awkward and sometimes difficult transition will pass.

I think Barry did two things that perhaps we did not fully recognize—he "witnessed" and he "cared."

He witnessed significant events like Mariposa lilies blooming in late spring, a killdeer's nest along a dry streambed, a redbud blooming in a remote section of the park, and he witnessed "the little things," like coyote tracks over human footprints on a dusty trails and countless others. Barry was our "star witness," and we relied on him, but he has retired. His witnessing earned credibility. His caring earned respect.

In remembering and honoring Barry, we need to model these two traits—witnessing and caring.

I encourage you, you who have the honor and privilege of witnessing the "significant events and the little things," to do so with renewed vigor. Do so, in honor of Barry and in honor of the resources at Coe.

I also encourage you to continue caring. Caring is important work. Director Ruth Coleman often reminds us that we need to make parks a "third rail" issue in the legislature . . . an issue that when touched gives jarring jolt. You have modeled this very well. When the bullet train and a reservoir were proposed at Coe, the agencies that proposed them felt like they had been bitten by a mountain lion and left the park alone. You are an outstanding example of the power of caring. Helping orient a visitor to a good hike is another example of the power of caring, recruiting a new volunteer or an association member is another, and the list is endless.

I join all of you in congratulating Barry on his retirement and thanking him for his years of witnessing, caring, and service. Thankfully the plants, animals, trails, and resources of Henry Coe State Park are still around, and so are you—the soul of the park.

Thank you for all that you do for state parks.

Nominations Sought for the Annual PRA Award

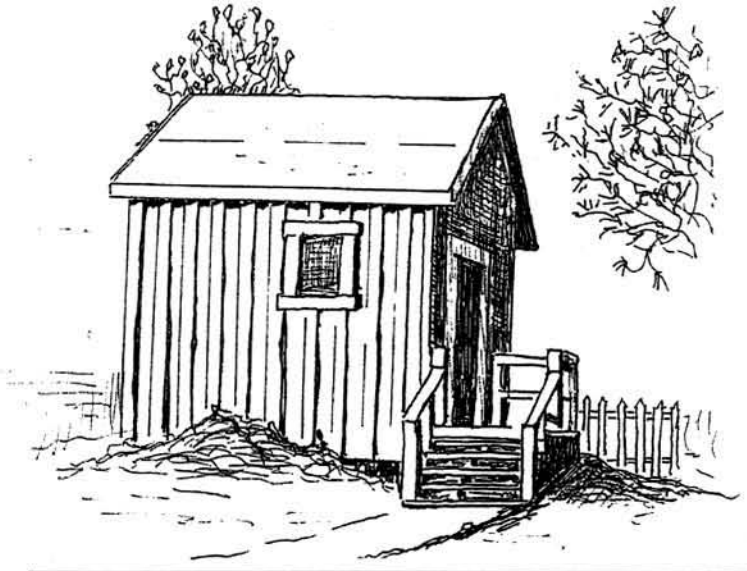
Each year at the PRA annual meeting held on an early Saturday in February, an award is presented to someone whose efforts have preserved and enriched Henry W. Coe State Park. It is not necessary that the recipient be a member of the Pine Ridge Association or be a uniformed volunteer in the park. Occasionally the award has been given to two people who had worked closely together to benefit the park. The recipient receives an engraved plaque, and the person's name is added to the large plaque that is displayed at the visitor center.

Two unofficial sets of criteria for selecting the recipient from among the nominees have been proposed:

- Leadership: scope, motivation, and initiative
- Involvement: scope, altruism, and time contribution
- Asset growth: recruiting, fund-raising, and contributions
- Ideas/projects: creative, innovative, follow-through with personal implementation
- Performance: past, sustained, future expectations
- Measurable accomplishments: visible results

- Has had a beneficial effect on the park's resources and activities
- Has sought out responsibility and has acted as a leader
- Has leveraged efforts into multiplicative effects by organizing the activities of others

We are asking PRA members to supply nominations for this award by the beginning of November. If there is someone you would like to nominate, please write a short paragraph of reasons why that person should be considered and send it to the PRA Secretary, Winslow Briggs, 480 Hale St., Palo Alto 94301 or WRBCoe@earthlink.net. A committee of the PRA board of directors will collect additional information about the activities of your nominee and will make a selection.



Time to Run for the PRA Board

The Pine Ridge Association will hold its annual election for Board of Directors in December. The terms of three directors expire at the end of this year. Now is the time to prepare your candidacy statement and send it to the Board's Secretary, Winslow Briggs, 480 Hale St., Palo Alto 94301.

Any association member may run for the Board. A member may also nominate another PRA member. To do this, send Winslow a short statement explaining why you believe the person would be a good Board member, and he will contact your nominee to ask the person to consider running.

The most important qualification for a Board member is a willingness to attend Board meetings and to participate in carrying out tasks for the association. Meetings typically take place every other month on week nights. The term of office is three years. If a Board member is also a uniformed Coe Park volunteer, meetings and board-related activities count toward volunteer hours.

We use the special nonprofit bulk-rate mailing permit for sending out association-related materials. However, this means that some members might not receive their newsletters or other materials for a few weeks after they are mailed. So that the ballots can be distributed (and received by all members) in a timely fashion, it is important that all candidacy statements be postmarked on or before **Friday, November 9.** Please send your statements to Winslow at the address above. (If you plan to nominate someone else, please do so at least two weeks earlier.) Your statement might be a few paragraphs long and might contain information such as how long you have been a PRA member, why you became interested in Coe Park, ways that you have served the park or other volunteer activities in which you have benefited the public, any special qualifications or experience that you have, and specific plans that you have for improving the park as a Board member.

If you have any questions about what it would be like to be a Board member or if you would like additional guidance on putting together a candidacy statement, please call Board Vice-President Kevin Gilmartin at 650/851-7813.

New Members through July
by Jim Wright

We are pleased to welcome the **new members** listed below. Thank you for your support, and welcome to the Pine Ridge Association!

Rob Conlan (family), Morgan Hill
Ed Dove, Vallejo
Robert Finley, San Francisco
Arthur Harrison, Cupertino
Bill and Cathy Holland (family), Palo Alto
Lee Ingraham II, Sunnyvale
Ralph Johnson, Gilroy
Shane Lorenz (family), Morgan Hill
Gary Newsome (family), Monterey
Kati and Randy Pauley (family), Gilroy
Richard Vassar, Los Altos
Ardis Walling, Redwood City

We need your help to keep our membership list current and accurate. If you are a paid member, your *Ponderosa* mailing label includes an expiration date. (No expiration date for life members and organizations.) If you have any questions regarding your membership or if you would like to update your address, please contact us.

E-mail: PRA@CoePark.org
Snail mail: 9100 East Dunne Ave., Morgan Hill, CA 95037
Fax: 408/778-5749
Phone: 408/779-2728

A Fond Farewell to Ranger Barry Breckling
by Barbara Bessey and Kevin Gilmartin

On June 9, 150 people—family, state park colleagues, volunteers, and friends—gathered to wish Barry well on his retirement after 30 years of public service in the state parks system. A number of the attendees spoke about the various ways in which Barry had touched—not only all of our lives—but also the lives of the visitors to Coe Park. Some of these comments are further reflected on by John Mott (see page 5).

Volunteer Bonnie Stromberg showed a videotape that she had prepared that included remarks and thank yous offered by individuals to Barry. Also included on the videotape was the award ceremony that took place earlier in Sacramento in which Director Ruth Coleman awarded Barry the Olmstead Award for vision and leadership.

Barry's accomplishments are many. One of the ways that Barry touched our lives was through the Uniformed Volunteer program that he established. We have worked with Barry as part of that program for almost 20 years. His always you-can-do-it attitude gave us opportunities to try things that we might not have thought about doing before.

We worked closely with Barry on the preparation of *The Ponderosa*. His From under My Brim articles filled all with pleasure and delight, and sometimes sadness as we mourn the loss of something in nature or in ourselves. We therefore decided that, upon Barry's retirement, we would retire his Brims with him. You will notice that the lead article in this issue is by guest writer Dinesh Desai, who has contributed articles to *The Ponderosa* in the past. If you would like to submit an article for a future issue, please contact us at the address on the back of this newsletter.

Thank you Barry for all that you have done for Coe Park! Best wishes for a happy and fulfilling retirement!

PRA Calendar

Saturday, November 3: **Fall Trail Day.** Help maintain the trails at Coe Park. No previous experience is necessary. For more information and to sign up, contact Ranger Cameron Bowers (*CBowe@parks.ca.gov*) or contact the Coe Park Visitor Center (408/779-2728). The Coe Park website describes what a typical trail day is like: *http://www.coepark.org/trailwork.html*.

Saturday, November 24: **PRA Coe Thanksgiving Saturday.** Celebrate Thanksgiving **Saturday** at Coe Park. Bring a dish and drinks to share. Hors d'oeuvres will be served starting around 4 p.m. This is always a fun event, rain or shine. Please call the Coe Park Visitor Center for more information and to sign up (408/779-2728).

Saturday, February 2, 2008: **The PRA Annual Meeting.** All PRA members are invited to attend the association's annual meeting and graduation of the new class of uniformed volunteers. A flyer containing more information will be distributed in January.

See you at the park!

Fire in Coe Park

Just as we were finalizing this issue, we learned about the fire in Coe Park. It burned more than 40,000 acres—an area larger than that of San Francisco. Smoke from the fire spread across the Bay Area and as far away as Nevada. The park was closed while the fire was burning; it has now re-opened to the public. More information about the fire will be included in the next issue of *The Ponderosa*.

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The Ponderosa is a publication of the Pine Ridge Association with approximately five issues per year. The PRA's mission is to enhance and enrich the public's experience at Henry Coe State Park through education and interpretation. Articles and artwork relating to the natural history, history, and management of the park are welcome. Please send submissions to the editors at 127 Glenwood Avenue, Woodside, CA 94062-3512; or call 650/851-7813.

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